

Amendments to the Specification:

Please replace the paragraph beginning at page 7, line 27, with the following amended paragraph:

If the information is not in the look-up table, or if a look-up table is not used, the firewall engine then compares the contents of the special registers to each rule in sequence (611) until a match is found (612). The search stops when a match is found (612) (613). Alternatively, for certain rules, known as counter rules, the firewall engine will increment the count register and continue the search. If the count threshold is exceeded, or if the search locates a match for a non-counter rule, the search results are written to a status register (613) 616. Likewise, if no match is found, and the entire set of rules has been examined, the search results are written to the status register. In addition, when a match is found, if a look-up table is used the information identifying the current application, such as the IP address, port and protocol, are written to the look-up table so that later packets in the current application may be processed using the look-up table instead of a rule search.

Please replace the paragraph beginning at page 8, line 27, with the following amended paragraph:

During the search, CPU 134 polls the status register to check whether the firewall engine is busy or has completed the search. When the CPU 134 determines that the search is complete, the CPU 134 executes certain actions against the current packet based on the information in the status register, such as permit or deny the packet, signal an alarm, and log the packet (614).